

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 20, 2005

Chairman Inhofe
Ranking Member Jeffords
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Senator Jeffords:

As you conference with the House of Representatives on the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 we call your attention to language that defines the terms 'Invasive Plant Species' and 'Native Plant Species'. Although the intent of the language is laudable we are concerned the existing language may inappropriately exclude existing suppliers of grass seed and nursery stock from public transportation projects, thereby making some environmental goals harder to achieve. We ask that you drop or modify the language so as not to disadvantage suppliers of certain non-invasive non-native grass and nursery stock and to meet environmental goals.

Transportation projects typically entail alterations of land and habitat, such as removal or addition of soil and rock, changes in surface grades, or construction of impervious hardscape surfaces that alter ambient atmospheric conditions at ground level. A typical large scale construction project can result in a profound change to the environment to the extent that reintroduction of native species is no longer practical because the 'native' conditions required by the preexisting native plant species no longer exist.

It is important that project managers, landscape architects and landscapers be able to abide by the principle of 'right plant in the right place.' Non-native non-invasive plants are often the best plants for those environments characterized by extreme conditions of heat, aridity or prolonged wetness, air pollution and continuing physical disturbance associated with some transportation projects. Successful establishment of non-native non-invasive plants, in difficult environments, may even prevent the spread of invasive plants which typically out-compete native species in disturbed soils.

We are in full agreement with the notion that federal transportation projects should not contribute to the problem of invasive plant species. Where possible such projects should contribute to the control of the spread of invasive plants. As such, we ask you to re-examine and modify the relevant language in your bill.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Gordon H. Smith
U.S. Senator